

Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church Vestry Meeting Minutes August 17, 2021

Vestry present:

The Rev. Neil Willard
David Robinson, Senior Warden
Shannon Westin, Junior Warden
Gretta Boshara
David Candler
Melanie Fahey
Rand Key
Steven Killworth
Mike Murphy
Jim Rosenbach
Posey Saenz
Libby Spoede
Susannah Webb
Lam Yu

Vestry absent:

Danna Kurtin
Kelly Williams

Clergy present:

The Rev. Ryan Hawthorne

Clergy absent:

The Rev. Elizabeth Parker

The hybrid in-person and Zoom meeting started at 5:30 PM and ended at 6:32 PM. Roger Hutchinson was present to assist with the hybrid technology.

1. **Opening Prayer.** Neil opened the meeting in prayer.
2. **Welcome to The Rev. Ryan Hawthorne.** David Robinson welcomed Ryan to Palmer and the meeting. Ryan introduced herself to the vestry.
3. **Community Sharing.** David R. encouraged community sharing.
4. **Minutes.** The June 15 minutes were approved without any corrections. Motion by Steve, second by Melanie, and the vestry voted to approve the minutes.
5. **Council Reports.**
 - a. **Finance Council:** Posey reported that multiple avenues of resolving the outstanding energy bill from the winter storm with the energy provider have been investigated. The finance committee recommends a payment schedule with an upfront payment and then payments amortized over the next 12 months. Palmer is working on a revision to its five-year agreement with the energy company to prevent the same issue occurring in the future. David R. reported that we have been advised it is possible that Palmer may receive a rebate which could be a significant percent of the bill (as much as 40-60%), pending legislation in Austin, which is why the amortizing the payment is recommended. And lastly, the endowment and finance

committees have approved \$200,000 toward the operational fund. Motion by Jim, second by Steve, and the vestry voted to approve the energy payment plan.

- b. **Worship Council:** Steve reported that the council has been flexible as there continue to be changes made during the various services with the dynamic COVID Delta variant situation.
- c. **Outreach Council:** Neil reported for Liz that Liz and Linda will be holding a meeting regarding the anticipated needs of asylum seekers, including Afghans, who may be passing through Houston. The meeting is in collaboration with the diocese refugee resettlement efforts.
- d. **Evangelism Council:** Lam said that the council did not meet over the summer, but the “Embracing Evangelism” series just completed the 6 week summer program. There have been approximately 12 people in attendance for the series and the numbers seem to be a dedicated group in regular attendance for the series.
- e. **Communications Council:** Susannah said that as we head into Fall, there will be a “Plan A” and “Plan B” for the Fall programs depending on local COVID-19 recommendations. Susannah also said there will be a refresh of some branding around the campus.
- f. **Stewardship Council:** Mike reported that the council did not meet over the summer break, but that they will start meeting with clergy and staff to plan for Fall engagement and programs to refocus Palmer on stewardship.
- g. **Building and Grounds Council:** Gretta said that Kirk has joined the Buildings & Grounds Committee and has been a great resource with his knowledge of the church campus and rectory. The porch repair of the rectory had been delayed because of bad weather but now is re-scheduled. The woodwork of the walls on either side of the stairs in the Nave was completed by a group talented volunteers. Gretta thanked Roger for the general refresh of the entryway into the administrative offices funded by a donation from Palmer Place guests. David R. announced that David Candler will join Gretta on the Buildings and Grounds Council.

6. Warden Reports.

- a. **Senior Warden:** David deferred his time to the task force and clergy reports.
- b. **Junior Warden:** Shannon deferred her time to the task force and clergy reports while encouraging everyone to stay safe, get vaccinated, and mask up.

7. Task Force Reports.

- a. **Membership Task Force:** Neil reported that the task force met and will revise and finalize the report this month. He will also invite the members of the task force to present their findings and recommendations to the vestry and congregation for feedback.
- a. **Property Development Task Force:** David R. asked for a motion from the vestry to move forward with the engagement of Wilson, Cribbs & Goren and JLL as real estate counsel and broker, respectively. This would be a preliminary step before discussion and facilitation of a conversation with the Palmer community this Fall. The meetings with the congregation would start after Labor Day. There will be a mix of webinars and small group sessions (virtual and/or in person as the pandemic allows).
 - i. Wilson, Cribbs & Goren engagement. Neil and David R. stated the contract has been reviewed by the Chancellor, Michael Chambers,

and Vice Chancellor, Tom Van Arsdale, who made several small suggestions, all of which were accepted and made. Any additional professional fees will be covered by an anonymous member of the Palmer community. A copy of the signed agreement will be made available for members of the Palmer Vestry. Motion by Gretta, second by Shannon, and the motion passed by a vote of 13 for and 1 opposed (Susannah Webb).

- ii. JLL engagement. Neil and David R. stated that the contract has been reviewed by the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor. Motion by Neil, second by Shannon, and the motion passed by a vote of 13 for and 1 opposed (Susannah Webb).
- iii. JHP introduction. David R. reported that a design planning firm is already working with the Episcopal Diocese in Dallas on the cathedral on their adjacent property development. An architect from this firm, W. Brian Keith, AIA, has been asked to consider the role of facilitator with the Palmer community.

8. Clergy Reports.

- a. **The Rev. Liz Parker – Associate:** Neil reported for Liz that Eucharistic Visitors have been suspended for now due to the current COVID rate. There is an upcoming training for Eucharistic Visitors so they will be ready when in person visits resume.
- b. **The Rev. Neil Willard – Rector:** The funeral for The Rev. John Price will be on Saturday. There will be limited seating in the nave and St. Bede’s Chapel for family, clergy, and the Scouts. The service will also be available via live stream for those unable to attend in person.
 - i. Housing Allowance Resolution for The Rev. Ryan Hawthorne. Motion by Steve, second by Jim, and the vestry voted unanimously to approve.

Whereas, the Reverend Ryan Hawthorne is compensated by Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church exclusively for the services as a minister of the gospel; and

Whereas, Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church does not provide Ryan Hawthorne with a rectory; therefore, it is hereby

Resolved, that \$22,800 of the total annualized compensation that shall be paid to Ryan Hawthorne for calendar year 2021 is hereby designated to be a housing allowance; and it is further

Resolved, that the designation of \$22,800 as a housing allowance shall apply to calendar year 2021 and all future years unless otherwise provided by the vestry.

- ii. Resolution in order to receive a grant from the Bishop Quinn Foundation. Neil reported that Palmer is in a unique position this year to receive a grant from the Bishop Quinn Foundation. Motion

by Steve, second by Lam, and the vestry voted unanimously to approve.

9. **Closing Prayer.** Ryan closed the meeting in prayer.

During its regular meeting on Tuesday, August 17, 2021, the Vestry of Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church formally signified its adherence to the Covenant Agreement between Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church and the Episcopal Diocese of Texas regarding the Rev. Ryan Hawthorne by unanimously passing a motion to that effect.

Those present were:

The Rev'd Neil Alan Willard, Rector
David Robinson, Senior Warden
Shannon Westin, Junior Warden
Libby Spoede, Clerk
Gretta Boshara
David Candler
Melanie Fahey
Rand Key
Steven Killworth
Mike Murphy
Jim Rosenbach
Posey Saenz
Libby Spoede
Susannah Webb
Lam Yu

Respectfully submitted,
Libby Spoede, Clerk

August 17, 2021